

Writing music (and music history)

Referential Ramifications in Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf's Kurtág-Zyklus

N.N. & N.N.

Introduction

In 2001, Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (b. 1962, Mannheim) composed an elaborate cycle of compositions with the title *Kurtág-Zyklus*. This cycle can be categorized as a poly-work, defined by the composer¹ as a work always consisting of different compositions that form a cycle. One of these compositions, which could be called the 'umbrella composition', contains all the other compositions, combined with new material. In a way, the concept of the musical work as a closed unity is abandoned here. The actual poly-work is not the 'umbrella composition' that contains the other works, but the constellation of all these interconnected works. The constituent parts of the poly-work are autonomous but not independent. Also, there is no real hierarchy in this constellation. Each sub-composition in a poly-work is already present in the initial conception. In this sense, the poly-works by Mahnkopf differ from other examples of music where compositions (or parts of compositions) reappear in different contexts. In the case of Luciano Berio, for instance, it is clear that his *Sequenzas* were written first, to be arranged into different versions of *Chemins*.²

Mahnkopf's first attempt at such a poly-work was the *Medusa-Zyklus*, written in the early 1990s. Four solo compositions (for clarinet, harpsichord, harp and oboe) can be performed separately, but are also integral parts of an oboe concerto with the title *Medusa*.³

In the *Kurtág-Zyklus*, the umbrella composition is *Hommage à György Kurtág*, a one-hour concerto for guitar accompanied by strings (without violins), trumpets and trombones, cimbalom, harmonium, celesta, harp and percussion.⁴ The guitar part of the *Kurtág-Zyklus*, composed for one player with two differently-tuned guitars, can be played separately as the *Kurtág-Duo*, for two guitarists playing alternately. Besides the guitar soloist, there are also five 'sub-soloists' as the composer calls them (French horn, clarinet, violin, piccolo, piccolo oboe) who play important roles at the centre of the *Hommage*. The parts for these instruments also exist as solo compositions (*Kurtág-Cantus I-IV*). The

¹ Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, 'Theory of Polyphony', in *Polyphony & complexity*, ed. by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Frank Cox, and Wolfram Schurig (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2002), pp. 38–53.

² Wieland Hoban discusses Berio's *Chemins* and other types of formal polyphony and over-writing in: Wieland Hoban, 'On the Methodology and Aesthetics of Form-Polyphony', in *The Foundations of Contemporary Composing*, ed. by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2004), pp. 85–117.

³ Mahnkopf himself offers an overview of the work's most important features in Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, 'Medusa: Concerning Conception, Poetics, and Technique', in *Polyphony & complexity*, ed. by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf and Franklin Cox (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2002), pp. 245–65. In addition to his analysis, Klaas Coulembier discussed aspects of multi-temporality in Klaas Coulembier, 'Multi-Temporality in Medusa-Zyklus and Kurtág-Zyklus', in *Die Musik von Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf*, ed. by Ferdinand Zehentreiter (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2012), pp. 88–103.

⁴ This specific instrumentation is very similar to the scoring of György Kurtág's 1989 composition *Grabstein für Stephan*.

other compositions in the *Kurtág-Zyklus* (*Todesmusik I* and *II*, and *Hommage à Mark Andre*) are also constructed from the different layers present in the accompanying parts.

We can already see from this short overview that Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf's *Kurtág-Zyklus* contains many references, both to works by Mahnkopf himself – which is intrinsic to a poly-work – and to compositions by other composers (György Kurtág and Mark Andre). In this essay, we will explore the different components of this referential network. First, we will uncover the different musical and extra-musical elements to which Mahnkopf refers, and discuss how these elements are interconnected. Second, we will highlight some of these interconnections through brief analyses of relationships between the different compositions Mahnkopf united in the *Kurtág-Zyklus*. Third, we will seek the motivations behind these specific choices. Why does Mahnkopf include references to Mark Andre and György Kurtág? And which aesthetic, ideological or personal points of view does Mahnkopf take up in establishing these specific references?

Kurtág-Zyklus as an intertextual network

The many connections between musical and extra-musical elements in the *Kurtág-Zyklus* have had an impact on the facture of the piece and may affect its perception. In this respect we could – from the perspective of both the composer and the listener – analyse the *Kurtág-Zyklus* as a complex network of intertextual relationships.

Since literary critic Julia Kristeva introduced the term in 1969,⁵ intertextuality has been the subject of rather diverse interpretations and has been used in very different contexts, from philosophy, literature and semiotics to art and music.⁶ According to poststructuralist philosophers, intertextuality is not a specific quality of certain text types, but rather a universal phenomenon. Roland Barthes introduced the appealing image of the '*chambre d'échos*', an imaginary echo chamber in which texts continuously resonate with other existing texts.⁷ Every text can be seen as a mosaic of citations, part of a universal intertextual network, in which an author inevitably transforms and reassembles already existing text fragments.⁸

The image of texts communicating with one another is also found in the writings of Umberto Eco and Harold Bloom. '[...] there are *no* texts, but only relationships *between* texts', Bloom states.⁹ In his book *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Bloom observes how the notion of influence is the driving force in the history of poetry. Poets find themselves reiterating what others have done before. The work of a new poet can be a reaction to shortcomings he or she finds in the work of predecessors, or the result of deliberate misreadings of earlier texts, 'so as to clear imaginative space

⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Sèmeiotikè: Recherches Pour Une Sémanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969).

⁶ For extensive studies and references, see: Tobias Bleek, *Musikalische Intertextualität Als Schaffensprinzip: Eine Studie Zu György Kurtágs Streichquartett Officium Breve Op. 28* (Saarbrücken: Pfau, 2010); Kevin Korsyn, 'Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence', *Music Analysis*, 10 (1991), 3–72; Michael L. Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

⁷ Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), p. 78. Also cited in Bleek, p. 25.

⁸ Kristeva, p. 146.

⁹ Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 3. Umberto Eco introduces a similar and often quoted image in his novel: Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (New York: Harcourt, 1983), p. 286. "Now I realized that not infrequently books speak of books: it is as if they spoke among themselves".

for themselves.’¹⁰ The writings of Harold Bloom have served as a theoretical framework for Joseph Straus and Kevin Korsyn in their respective texts *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (1990) and *Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence* (1991).¹¹

Bloom’s theory of influence is primarily author-centred: the author is the subject of a struggle with the influence of the past. In contrast, concepts like Umberto Eco’s double coding and intertextual irony are much more concerned with the perception by the receiver.¹² In his well-known novel *The Name of the Rose*, Eco introduces intertextual irony by integrating countless references to historical sources and events, without being overtly specific. Different reading levels may lead to different degrees of understanding the novel. One reader may enjoy the book as an exciting detective story, whereas another reader may be flabbergasted by the intellectual narrative with its many references and even in-jokes.

Gérard Genette’s study *Palimpsestes, La littérature au second degré* (1982) approaches the notion of intertextuality from yet another angle. The French literary scholar defines five different categories of intertextuality. Genette primarily discusses what he describes as transtextuality, or textual transcendence. Transtextuality covers ‘tout ce qui met en relation, manifeste ou secrète, avec d’autres textes.’¹³ In his view, intertextuality is a specific type of transtextuality, i.e. ‘coprésence entre deux ou plusieurs textes’.¹⁴ Examples of intertextual relationships in this respect include quotation or plagiarism. In addition to this notion of transtextuality, Genette develops concepts such as paratextuality, which refers to all the titles, subtitles, prefaces, afterwords, etc. a text contains; metatextuality, the comments or analysis written on a text; hypertextuality, which means that a new text (hypertext) elaborates elements of an older text (hypotext); and architextuality, which refers to the classification of a text to a certain genre.

These five categories distinguished by Genette are all present in Mahnkopf’s *Kurtág-Zyklus*. To start with, different compositions are quoted within Mahnkopf’s cycle. The *Kurtág-Duo*, for instance, is cited literally in *Hommage à György Kurtág* (intertextuality). Furthermore, the title of the work *Hommage à György Kurtág* clearly refers to the many *Hommages* written by Kurtág himself (paratextuality). Mahnkopf also published an analysis of his *Kurtág-Zyklus* (metatextuality).¹⁵ In addition, the work is essentially a guitar concerto (architextuality). Finally, as will become clear later, Mahnkopf’s *Kurtág-Zyklus* clearly draws on other, already existing pieces of music, both by Mahnkopf himself and by other composers (hypertextuality).

Kurtág-Zyklus: origins and context

As the title reveals, the person and music of György Kurtág can of course be seen as the centre of this referential and self-referential network. As the composer states, his decision to compose this cycle

¹⁰ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 5.

¹¹ Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Korsyn.

¹² Umberto Eco, ‘Intertextual Irony and Levels of Reading’, in *On Literature* (New York: Harcourt, 2005).

¹³ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes. La Littérature Au Second Degré* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982), p. 7.

¹⁴ Genette, p. 8.

¹⁵ Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, ‘Analysis of My Kurtág Cycle’, in *Facets of the Second Modernity*, ed. by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Frank Cox, and Wolfram Schurig (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2008), pp. 157–96.

was motivated by a great admiration for Kurtág's music, as well as a coincidental encounter with Kurtág in person. Mahnkopf describes the context as follows:

'It was in early 1998 that I recognized Kurtág's central importance for my work. I was speaking with my friend Bernd Asmus [...] and the conversation came around to the subject of Kurtág's music; I told him that it had lately become very important to me because it stood like no other for the remembrance of the culture of great music that had essentially been destroyed, and thus for the culture of humanism, because it was a non-conservative music created with conservative means, and hence a paradigmatic expression of that lost era. A few days later I learned that Kurtág had been awarded the Siemens prize and I was also to receive a grant. This and the encounter in Munich [...] made a lasting impression on me.'¹⁶

During an informal conversation, Mahnkopf put it even more clearly: '*for me, there is no other choice than to love Kurtág's music.*'¹⁷ His appreciation of Kurtág's music is not only directed to the music itself, but also (and perhaps even more so) to the position Kurtág occupies in recent music history. It should be noted that Mahnkopf's *Kritik der neuen Musik* was also published in 1998. In this book, Mahnkopf ardently defends his own aesthetic choices (as formulated in the criteria for a second modernity) through an analysis of existing problems in the field of (mainly German) contemporary music.¹⁸ He also criticizes approaches to composition that in his view are disingenuous or not artistically honest, referring in the first place to post-modernist currents of the 1970s. Both post-modernism and 'traditional' modernism (in the sense of holding on to the aesthetics of the first Darmstadt generation) are problematic to Mahnkopf.¹⁹ Kurtág's peculiar position in the field of contemporary music – innovative, but with a close connection to music history and tradition – is very much in line with Mahnkopf's own desiderata for the music of the 21st century. In *Kritik der neuen Musik*, he makes the following statement about Kurtág and others:

'Die Vielschreiberei, immer noch Sigel der Komponistenzukunft, zahlt sich nicht aus. Die verantwortungsvollen Komponisten – so allen voran Berg, Webern, Varèse, Kurtág – wissen dies und reagieren darauf mit Konzentration und Individuation.'

'Hack writing, still a characteristic of many composers, is not rewarding. Composers taking responsibility – in the first place Berg, Webern, Varèse, Kurtág – are aware of this and react with concentration and individuality.'²⁰

Additionally, the deliberate choice of the title *Hommage à György Kurtág* is an obvious connection with the oeuvre of Kurtág himself, in which homages play an important role. Luigi Nono also wrote an *Ommagio à György Kurtág* (1983), after Kurtág had composed his *Ommagio à Luigi Nono* in 1979.

¹⁶ Mahnkopf, 'Analysis of My Kurtág Cycle', pp. 157–158.

¹⁷ Conversation with [the author] on 30 November 2010 at Mahnkopf's home in Freiburg.

¹⁸ These criteria are defined more clearly in Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, 'Second Modernity - An Attempted Assessment', in *Facets of the Second Modernity*, ed. by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Frank Cox, and Wolfram Schurig (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2008), pp. 9–16.

¹⁹ Mahnkopf, 'Second Modernity - An Attempted Assessment.' On page 10 he states: '*The composers of the second modernity are aesthetically enlightened in their thinking and aware in their compositional technique. The former means that they work on the unsolved aporiae of post-modernism (but also classical modernism and the avant-garde) as problems [...].*'

²⁰ Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, *Kritik Der Neuen Musik. Entwurf Einer Musik Des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998), p. 14. (our translation)

With the title, Mahnkopf situates his composition (and his work in general) in a larger musical/historical context through the work of György Kurtág (and, in a sense, Nono), not on the level of musical material or quotations, but on a more fundamental level: the level of musical aesthetics, or perhaps even musical ideology.²¹

Mahnkopf expounded on his ideas about the current new music scene on numerous occasions. As a self-proclaimed Hegelian thinker, he composes the music that is necessary to reach a higher state of (here, artistic) truth, and in this respect, his compositional choices contribute to fitting his music into the bigger picture.

"Im Grunde meines Herzens glaube ich an den Fortschritt der Menschheit, ich bin weitgehend Hegelianer, ich glaube daran, dass sich langfristig die Vernunft und auch die Qualität in geistigen Bereichen (Philosophie, Wissenschaft, Kultur, Kunst und Musik) durchsetzt.'

'From the bottom of my heart I believe in the progress of Mankind, I am a convinced Hegelian thinker. Within the domain of reason (philosophy, science, culture, art and music), I am confident that quality will prevail in the long run.'²²

Kurtág's Grabstein für Stephan as a model for the Kurtág-Zyklus

The connection with Kurtág's *Grabstein für Stephan* for guitar and ensemble is made evident by the fact that Mahnkopf uses its main features as a point of departure for his own work.²³ This is obvious in the first place from the scoring.

Grabstein für Stephan	Hommage à György Kurtág
guitar (soloist)	guitar (soloist)
piano	
	piccolo ('sub-soloist')
oboe	piccolo oboe ('sub-soloist')
E♭ clarinet	E♭ clarinet ('sub-soloist')
B♭ bass clarinet	
French horns (3)	French horn ('sub-soloist')
	violin ('sub-soloist')
trumpets (2)	trumpets (2)
trombones (2)	trombones (2)
tuba	
harmonium	harmonium

²¹ The term ideology is understood here in the same way as Joseph Kerman defines it in Joseph Kerman, 'How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out', *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1980), 311–31. On page 314: 'By ideology, I mean a fairly coherent set of ideas brought together not for strictly intellectual purposes but in the service of some strongly held communal belief.'

²² Ferdinand Zehentreiter, 'Gespräch Mit Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf', in *Die Musik von Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf*, ed. by Ferdinand Zehentreiter (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2012), pp. 319–36 (p. 320). (our translation)

²³ Mahnkopf, 'Analysis of My Kurtág Cycle', pp. 160–161.

harp	harp
celesta	celesta
cimbalom	cimbalom
vibraphone	vibraphone
tubular bells	
percussion	percussion
timpani	
bass drum	
violas (3)	violas (3)
celli (3)	celli (3)
double bass	double bass
whistles (3)	
peskó-duda (alarm signal) (3)	

Table 1 instrumentation of *Grabstein für Stephan* and *Hommage à György Kurtág*

Furthermore, Mahnkopf identified six types of music in *Grabstein für Stephan* and linked these with features of his own style. The slow guitar arpeggios that mark the beginning of Kurtág's composition, for instance, are found in the guitar part of Mahnkopf's *Kurtág Duo* for two guitars, but projected onto a very narrow, microtonal range. The guitar scordatura in both passages makes the performance gestures very similar. The arpeggio *Gestalt* also occurs as an often-repeated motif played by the harmonium, celesta, harp and cimbalom together (see Figure 2), this time expressing chords Mahnkopf had first used in his music theatre composition *Angelus Novus* (1997-2000).²⁴

Larghissimo Kurtág György Op.15/c.

Chit

Pno

3/0

pppp, lontano

pppp, lontano

con Ped. I

Ped II (super-sord)

Figure 1 Opening measures of *Grabstein für Stephan*

²⁴ The other types of music are called 'nothingness', the 'death rhythm', messianic lines, sudden outbursts and cymbal/tam tam sounds. (Mahnkopf, 'Analysis of My Kurtág Cycle', pp. 160–161.)



Figure 2 Arpeggios in *Hommage à György Kurtág* (mm. 33-36)

In addition to the solo guitar, Mahnkopf indicated five instruments as 'sub-soloists'. The French horn, violin, oboe, piccolo oboe, clarinet and piccolo also play important roles in the final section of *Grabstein für Stephan* (page 14 in the score).

Other references in *Kurtág-Zyklus*

Besides referring to Kurtág, Mahnkopf also creates connections with his own music. Although he dislikes reusing composition techniques, he often reuses and reworks material from earlier compositions.²⁵ In the case of the *Kurtág-Zyklus*, Mahnkopf uses the previously mentioned set of chords, which he calls the 'Angelus chords', since they appeared in *Angelus Novus*. The parts of the sub-soloists are constructed entirely of elements from *Solitude-Sérénade* for piccolo oboe and ensemble (1997), which is in turn a rearrangement of *Solitude-Nocturne* for piccolo oboe solo (1992-1993). Within his own oeuvre, such connections extend even further in compositions after the *Kurtág-Zyklus*, as Mahnkopf illustrates in his essay *Arbeitsbericht 2006*.²⁶

Looking at the titles of the compositions which make up the *Kurtág-Zyklus*, one last reference stands out. *Hommage à Mark Andre* is a composition for cimbalom solo and is a second-degree derivation of *Hommage à György Kurtág*. Mahnkopf first used and altered the cimbalom part of *Hommage à György Kurtág* to create *Todesmusik*, from which he then derived *Hommage à Mark Andre*. Mahnkopf gave form to this kinship by also using and transforming pitch material from a composition by Mark Andre (*AB I*). The most apparent link between *Grabstein für Stephan*, *Hommage à György*

²⁵ Conversation with [the author] on 30 November 2010 at Mahnkopf's home in Freiburg.

²⁶ Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, *Die Humanität Der Musik* (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2007), p. 31.

Kurtág and *AB I* is the use of the cimbalom, a folk instrument from Kurtág's homeland rarely used in Western art music, but at the same time increasingly popular in contemporary music.²⁷

In addition to such musical references, there is a quotation from Borges' *El milagro secreto* at the top of the score of *Hommage à György Kurtág*: '*Pensó el tiempo se ha detenido*' – '*He thought: time has come to a halt*'. First, this quotation refers to the radical quietness and slowness of *Hommage à György Kurtág*. The long duration (over one hour) and the internal dramaturgy (the sub-soloists remain silent during the first fifteen minutes) serves the aim of suspending time – or at least of disturbing our experience of time. But there is a further similarity between the text and the music. Borges tells the story of Jaromir Hladík, a playwright living in Prague during the Second World War. He is sentenced to death and – after the first shock upon learning his fate – wants to finish his last play before he dies. Hladík prays to God, asking for another year to finish the work, but the execution is planned for within a few days. When the moment of his execution has arrived, time freezes and Hladík experiences a subjective period of time in which he can finish his project. The phrase chosen by Mahnkopf summarizes this quintessential moment in the story. Although the main character still dies at the end of the story, so his fate does not change, he nevertheless is able to finish the work that would give him a place in history, thus granting him eternal life. Although this is perhaps somewhat speculative, the short passage in *Hommage à György Kurtág* where the sub-soloists, being the main agents of the musical discourse at this time, are silent (mm. 346-351) can be connected with this passage in the story. Borges's phrase occurs about three-quarters of the way through the entire story, just like this passage in the composition.

El milagro secreto also fits in with the theme of death that was already present in the link with *Grabstein für Stephan*, the use of a death rhythm, and the title *Todesmusik*.

The score of the *Kurtág-Duo* bears another quotation: '*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*', an enigmatic reference to Friedrich Nietzsche's chaotic book with the same title. The huge contrast between the two types of music within the *Kurtág-Duo* (one frenetic and one very subtle) is the most evident manifestation of Nietzsche's title. On a more fundamental level, the style and form of Nietzsche's uncompromising, seemingly chaotic and thus very complicated book can be seen as a metaphor for Mahnkopf's approach to the form of *Hommage à György Kurtág*. This 'umbrella composition' contains contradictory elements, ordered in a multilayered manner, leading to an equally chaotic and disorientating dramaturgy. However, both this literary connection and the Borges quotation remain undiscussed in Mahnkopf's otherwise quite detailed accounts of the composition.

Since there are so many layers of meaning and levels of connections, we have put into the table below the most important aspects of the *Hommage à György Kurtág* that can be linked to other musical or extra-musical influences.

²⁷ Kurtág, André and Mahnkopf come easily to mind, but many other composers including Peter Eötvös, Klaus Huber, Luca Francesconi, Harrison Birtwistle, Jonathan Harvey and Pierre Boulez have also done so.

element in <i>Kurtág-Zyklus</i>	refers to	additional information
use of the word 'Hommage'	- Kurtág's oeuvre - the composition by Luigi Nono with the same title	By now, Mahnkopf has established his own series of homages
instrumentation	instrumentation of <i>Grabstein für Stephan</i>	
choice for five 'sub-soloists' (violin, clarinet, French horn, oboe, piccolo)	importance of these instruments near the end of <i>Grabstein für Stephan</i>	
six types of musical material	<i>Grabstein für Stephan</i> (through analysis by Mahnkopf)	
dedication to Jurgen Rück	guitarist who also performed <i>Grabstein für Stephan</i>	
melodic-harmonic material in <i>Hommage à Mark Andre</i>	pitch material in <i>ABI</i> by Mahnkopf's friend Mark Andre	
use of cimbalom	- frequent use of the instrument by Kurtág and Mark Andre	General popularity of the instrument among modern composers
melodic material for the sub-soloists (cantilenas)	<i>Solitude-Nocturne</i> by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (see analysis below)	
metric framework	derived from <i>Solitude-Nocturne</i> derived from the letters 'György Kurtág' (see analysis below)	
harmonic content	derived from chords in <i>Angelus Novus</i>	- which are in turn derived from <i>Solitude-Nocturne</i> - <i>Angelus Novus</i> refers to Walter Benjamin and Brian Ferneyhough
use of the letters of György Kurtág	Luigi Nono's use of the phonemes of György Kurtág in his <i>Ommagio à György Kurtág</i>	
quotation at the top of the score ('Pensó el tiempo se ha detenido')	<i>El milagro secreto</i> , a short story by Jorge Luis Borges about a condemned Jewish playwright	- Kurtág is a Jewish composer - Borges also wrote <i>El Aleph</i> . On Mahnkopf's website, the Hebrew letter aleph is shown at the upper left corner - Mahnkopf's wife Francesca Yardenit Albertini was a Jewish professor of religion and philosophy and taught him the fundamentals of Hebrew
quotation at the top of the Kurtág-Duo ('Jenseits von Gut und Böse')	Book by Friedrich Nietzsche	
<i>Todesmusik</i>	- the word <i>Grabstein</i> in Kurtág's title - the short story by Borges	Trumpets, trombones and bass drum are often used in requiem compositions in the classical and romantic eras

Table 2 Overview of internal and external connections in *Kurtág-Zyklus*

Analytical examples

Of the many examples of intertextual relationships, we will now discuss two concrete features of the *Kurtág-Zyklus*. First, we will explore how Mahnkopf derived the material for the cantilenas of the sub-soloists from the earlier compositions *Solitude-Nocturne* and *Solitude-Serenade* and transformed it into *Kurtág-Cantus I* for A clarinet. Second, we will show how Mahnkopf uses the letters of Kurtág's name to create a structure that allows for a balanced distribution of the different layers of material that are connected with the different sub-compositions.

The melodic material of the sub-soloists in *Hommage à György Kurtág* is a rearrangement of melodic cells from Mahnkopf's solo piccolo oboe composition *Solitude-Nocturne* (1992/1993). In 1997, Mahnkopf composed an ensemble accompaniment to this solo composition. This led to *Solitude-Sérénade* for piccolo oboe and ensemble. This piece was used as the closing part of his music theatre work *Angelus Novus* (1997-2000) and it in turn influenced the *Kurtág-Zyklus*. In addition to the melodic borrowing, Mahnkopf also based the harmonic language of both *Angelus Novus* and the *Kurtág-Zyklus* on the harmonic properties of the multiphonics from the piccolo oboe solo composition.²⁸

Mahnkopf summarizes the main points of departure for *Solitude-Nocturne* as follows:

‘Erstens bedurfte es einer gewissen Extension über Maß; [...] Viertens musste ich mir buchstäblich für alles Zeit nehmen. Daher sind dem Fluss der Musik immer wieder Fermatentakte ohne rhythmisches Innenleben einbeschrieben [...]. Fünftens musste die Momentform, also jener Abschnitt definiert werden, der dem Stillstehen der Zeit entsprechen sollte. Ich entschied mich für Mehrklänge, die mit Liegetönen verbunden werden. [...] Ich entschied mich für einen Prozess, in dem sich zwei sehr ähnliche Melodiktypen vermengen und der dadurch den Klangraum und den harmonischen Raum aufbaut und somit Statik allererst situiert.’

‘First of all, the piece required a certain degree of extensiveness; [...] Fourth, I literally had to take time for everything. Therefore, the flow of the music is constantly defined by fermata bars with no rhythmical inner life [...]. Fifth, the moment form, i.e. each segment had to be defined, which were supposed to correspond to the standing still of time. I decided to use multiphonics, which would be connected by long held tones. [...] I decided to use a process in which two ‘ähnliche Melodiktypen’ are intertwined, a process resulting in an expanding sonic and harmonic space [...].’²⁹

Mahnkopf identifies his two *ähnliche Melodiktypen* as male and female. While these two types of music were scattered in *Solitude-Nocturne*, they are now separated in *Hommage à György Kurtág*. In consequence, each sub-soloist plays two cantilenas, a shorter male cantilena and a longer female one.

²⁸ For a discussion of the harmonic material of the *Kurtág-Zyklus*, see Mahnkopf, ‘Analysis of My Kurtág Cycle.’

²⁹ Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, ‘Vermag Musik Die Zeit Vergessen Zu Machen? Überlegungen Zur Künstlichkeit Musikalischer Zeit’, in *Aisthesis: Zur Erfahrung von Zeit, Raum, Text und Kunst*, ed. by N. Müller-Schöll and S. Reither (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2005), pp. 163–71 (p. 166). (our translation).

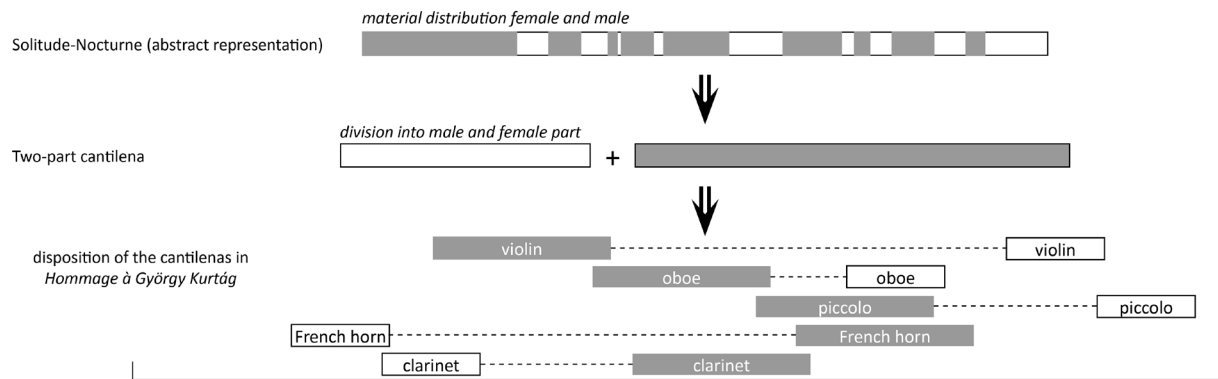


Figure 3 Derivation of sub-soloist cantilenas from *Solitude-Nocturne*

By literally cutting measures from the composition and re-pasting them in an alternative order, Mahnkopf created a new temporal, rhythmic and melodic framework for each of the sub-soloists. When using complete measures of *Solitude-Nocturne*, Mahnkopf simply retained the original time signatures. Sometimes only parts of measures were used because of the removal of multiphonics or because of a change in melodic type halfway through the measure. In such cases, Mahnkopf would calculate the appropriate measure length to fit the music he pasted. Furthermore, *Solitude-Nocturne* contains a number of measures without meter or rhythm, but with the duration indicated in seconds. Since the tempo of *Hommage à György Kurtág* is $\text{♩} = 30$ bpm throughout, he could easily replace these measure lengths with a simple time signature. The reordered male material from *Solitude-Nocturne*, with time signatures added above the staves and with multiphonics crossed out, is shown in Figure 4.

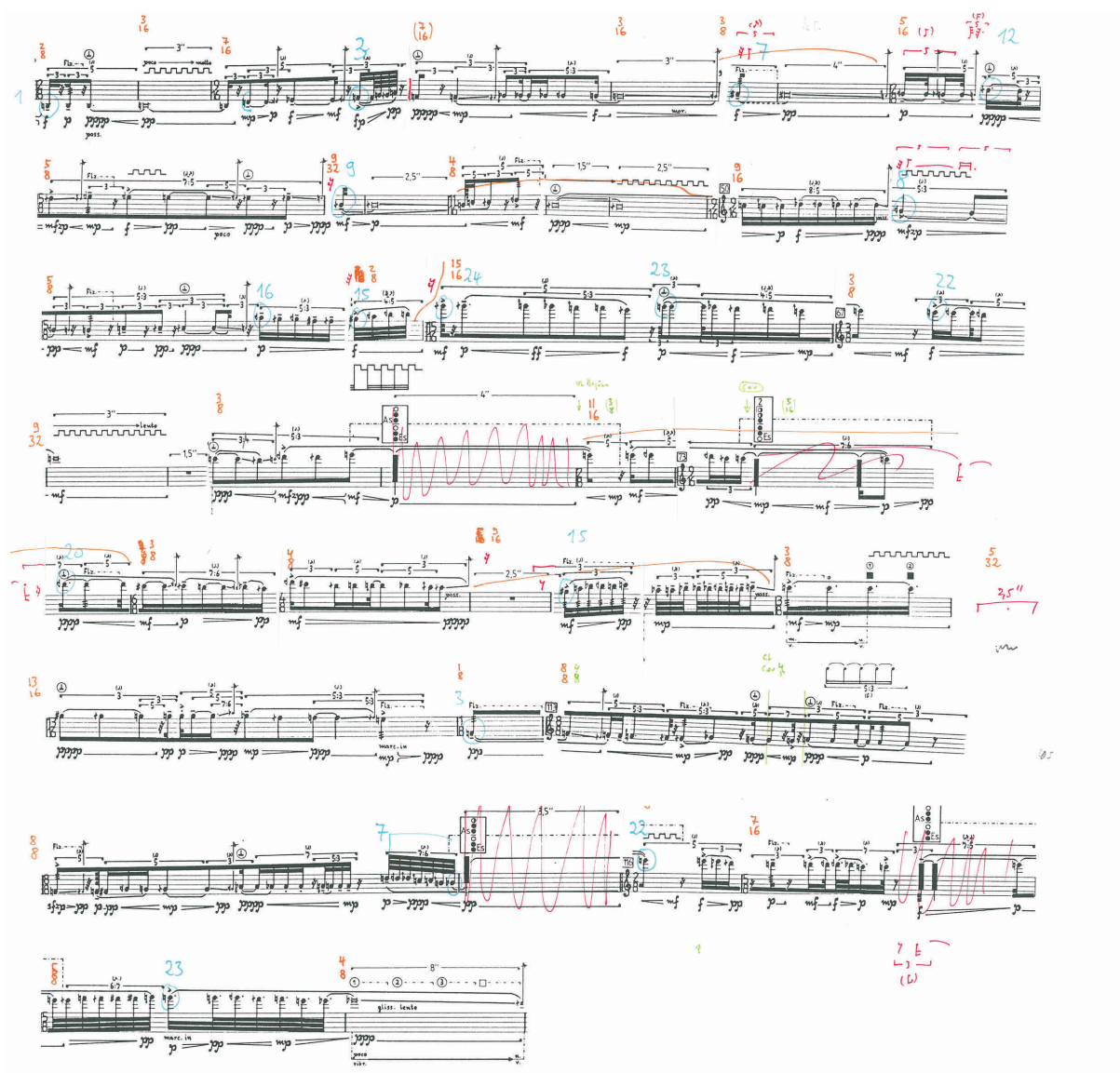


Figure 4 Pasted and annotated rearrangement of male elements from *Solitude-Nocturne*

As mentioned before, Mahnkopf planned a series of four solo compositions with the titles *Kurtág-Cantus I* to *IV* from the sub-soloist's cantilenas. There will be no *Kurtág-Cantus* for oboe or piccolo oboe, since such a composition would be too similar to the original *Solitude-Nocturne*.

The solo compositions are not simply the parts of the 'sub-soloists' in *Hommage à György Kurtág* cut and pasted in as new pieces. Mahnkopf rearranged the music and interspersed it with central pitches. To make this more concrete, Figure 5 shows the first page of the score of *Kurtág-Cantus I*, with our annotations. The rectangles show the male elements, the grey boxes highlight the female elements, and the darker grey arrows indicate the inserted measures.

für / for Jörg Widmann
Kurtág-Cantus I
 für Klarinette in A / for clarinet in A
 (2005)

1

Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf
 (* 1962)

Figure 5 Kurtág-Cantus I, first page of the score with annotations

Mahnkopf redistributes the elements he had grouped in the two parts of the cantilena in *Hommage à György Kurtág* (mm. 128-158 and mm. 214-274 respectively). Male and female elements alternate from beginning to end, and are separated by the inserted measures. The exact durations for these inserts were defined by Mahnkopf on a separate piece of paper, also indicating how many notes each inserted measure should contain. To define the pitches of these inserts, Mahnkopf designed a microtonal scale within the range of an augmented fourth. This is the transposition interval between the original E \flat clarinet of *Hommage à György Kurtág* and the A clarinet of *Kurtág-Cantus I*, in other words the downward shift of the register by a tritone. These eleven pitches occur in nominal order during the first six interpolated measures and are permuted in the remainder of the composition. There is a general process of increase and decrease, both in the length of the interruptions and in the number of tones per interruption. If we look at the reordering of the male and female materials, we see two different approaches. The male material is cut up into pieces and put back together in the right order, which is clear from comparing the male motifs in Figure 4 with Figure 5. The female material is distributed in a less straightforward way, without a clearly distinguishable plan; the only meaningful observation we can make is that Mahnkopf saved the first measure of the female cantilena for the very end of the *Kurtág-Cantus*.

In the *Hommage à György Kurtág*, Mahnkopf not only derives musical material from his own compositions, he also uses the name of György Kurtág in many different ways to create structures that help to shape the music. It should be noted that Luigi Nono – a composer who Mahnkopf deeply admires – also uses the letters of the name of György Kurtág as text in his *Ommagio a György Kurtág*.

Mahnkopf derived specific durations or bar lengths from the position of the letters in the alphabet (G = 7 seconds or $\frac{7}{16}$, Y = 25 seconds or $\frac{9}{8} \frac{7}{16}$, A = 1 second or $\frac{1}{16}$). As an example, the following table shows the succession of measure lengths over the course of eight sections in the guitar part, and makes clear how measure lengths are cut in order to reach the desired duration. The letter r, for instance, is linked with a duration of 18 sixteenth-notes. This duration is split into two times $\frac{9}{16}$ (see the underscored r in the first and second row of the table). Again, at a tempo of $\text{♩} = 30$, a sixteenth note equals exactly one second.

Guitar microtonal section number	metric scheme	duration
1	$\frac{7}{16} \frac{25}{16} \frac{15}{16} \frac{5}{16} \frac{9}{16}$ (r = 18 = $\frac{9}{16} + \frac{9}{16}$) G y o e <u>r</u>	61"
2	$\frac{9}{16} \frac{7}{16} \frac{25}{16} \frac{7}{16} \frac{13}{16}$ (y = 25 = $\frac{13}{8} + \frac{9}{8}$) <u>r</u> g y G <u>y</u>	61"
3	$\frac{6}{8} \frac{15}{16} \frac{5}{8} \frac{9}{16} \frac{7}{16} \frac{2}{8}$ (y = 25 = $\frac{2}{8} + \frac{10}{8} + \frac{1}{16}$) <u>y</u> o e r g <u>y</u>	61"
4	$\frac{10}{8}$ <u>y</u>	20"
5	$\frac{1}{16} \frac{7}{16} \frac{25}{16} \frac{15}{16} \frac{5}{16} \frac{9}{8}$ <u>y</u> G y o e r	71"
6	$\frac{7}{16} \frac{25}{16} \frac{7}{16} \frac{25}{16} \frac{7}{16}$ (o = 15 = $\frac{7}{16} + \frac{4}{8}$) g y G y <u>o</u>	71"
7	$\frac{4}{8} \frac{5}{16} \frac{9}{8} \frac{7}{16} \frac{25}{16} \frac{7}{16} \frac{1}{16}$ (y = 25 = $\frac{1}{16} + \frac{12}{8}$) <u>o</u> e r g y G <u>y</u>	71"
8	$\frac{12}{8} \frac{15}{16} \frac{5}{8} \frac{9}{16} \frac{7}{16} \frac{25}{16} \frac{7}{16} \frac{15}{16} \frac{5}{16} \frac{9}{8}$ <u>y</u> o e r g y G y o e (r)	152"

Table 3 Metric scheme for microtonal guitar sections, derived from the name Gyoergy Kurtág

On a more fundamental and structural level, Mahnkopf uses these letters again to define specific proportions according to which the different materials of the *Hommage à György Kurtág* are distributed.³⁰

By dividing the total time span of the composition according to these percentages, Mahnkopf defines specific points in time where elements from one material type or another can appear. Figure 6 was compiled using information from the original sketches of this composition, and shows how Mahnkopf defined the entrance points of the sub-soloist cantilenas by using the proportion of 64%. It should be noted that the consecutive application of this percentage at different parts of the timeline leads to many different divisions of divisions, and hence to an irregular distribution. The total duration of 30 is first divided into two parts of 19.2 and 10.8 ($30 \times 0.64 = 19.2$).³¹ These durations are in turn divided

³⁰ Mahnkopf, 'Analysis of My Kurtág Cycle', p. 162.

³¹ The theoretical total duration here would be 45 minutes, but Mahnkopf sketched this on a sheet of millimetre paper using a total length of 30 centimetres. For a detailed account of the translation from sketch to

By using different proportions for different layers, and by including other proportions derived from the same, Mahnkopf is able to create higher densities of one material type near the beginning and the end of the composition and higher densities of another material type in the middle. In this way he produces a formal balance between all the different elements of the *Kurtág-Zyklus*, combined in the umbrella composition *Hommage à György Kurtág*.

Aesthetics, ideology, referentiality and self-referentiality

score, see Klaas Coulembier, 'Multi-Temporality. Analyzing Simultaneous Time Layers in Selected Compositions by Elliott Carter and Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf' (Ph. D. diss., University of Leuven, 2013), pp. 230–239.

15

contemporary composers have a clear view of their aesthetic preferences, in Mahnkopf's case there is no separation between his personal conviction and the collective evolution of art music he discerns from interpreting recent evolutions. As a result, his music often seems to be an exemplification of his theories, or – the other way around – his theoretical observations can be seen as justifications for his compositional choices. Either way, the most important conclusion is that both parts of his output show a strong intellectual coherence. In this respect, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at Mahnkopf's position with respect to historical currents such as modernism and postmodernism, as well as more recent developments in music history (and Mahnkopf's reading of it) since 2000.

Mahnkopf very clearly expressed his preference for the kinds of music that validate the heritage of modernism. In his *Kritik der neuen Musik*, he draws a direct line from Josquin via Beethoven to Ferneyhough (implying that he himself forms part of this historical current).³³ Mahnkopf discusses the treatment of material in Josquin's music, and observes how Josquin is 'ahead of his time'. Over the course of just one page, he relates this to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schönberg, Webern, Boulez and Ferneyhough. What connects these composers is the successful combination of musical expression and rationality in their work. Although one could argue that Mahnkopf's reading of music history is perhaps one-sided, and probably largely apologetic, it was not primarily this 'writing himself into music history' that triggered considerable irritation among musicologists and composers. The criticism Mahnkopf has had to endure (especially in the 1990s and early 2000s), and which still influences his image as a composer and as a person today, is the result of his own critical attitude towards any kind of music or art expression that does not fit in with his historiography. Mahnkopf's critical attitude is rooted in his affiliation with the philosophical *Frankfurter Schule*, practicing what is known as *Kritische Theorie*. Although his critique of the 'new music system' was part of a philosophical exercise, many of the people at whom his critical discourse was indirectly aimed felt as if they were being attacked personally. Given the sometimes-blunt statements Mahnkopf makes, this is not surprising. First and foremost, his judgment of post-modern currents in recent music history is very harsh:

'The conclusion of Postmodernism at the end of the twentieth century was eye-opening: it was hardly more than an intermezzo, which identified a problem that it could neither solve nor clearly identify. [...] Its abstruse thesis of the end of history was also an expression of the desire to interrupt the whirlwind of progress.'³⁴

His marked opinions and the intellectualist style in which he expressed these ideas have not earned him much appreciation in musical circles. In a more recent interview, he acknowledges this issue, and reaches the following conclusion:

'Spätestens ab 2000 nimmt meine aktive Kritik am Neue-Musik-System ab. Ich wurde älter, ich wiederhole mich ungern, konzentrierte mich auf andere Dinge, vor allem kam ich in

Kreidler and Harry Lehman, leading to the publication of Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Johannes Kreidler and Harry Lehmann, *Musik, Ästhetik, Digitalisierung. Eine Kontroverse* (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2010).

³³ Mahnkopf, *Kritik Der Neuen Musik. Entwurf Einer Musik Des 21. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 96–97.

³⁴ Our translation of Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, *Kritische Theorie Der Musik* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2006), p. 132. But besides criticizing general phenomena, his attacks can also be very personal, for instance his criticism of Karlheinz Stockhausen. (Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, 'Schönberg Als Lehrer', *Musik-Konzepte (Arnold Schönbergs 'Berline Schule')*, 117/118 (2002), 164–75 (pp. 168–169).

immer „prominentere“ Positionen hinein, in denen man nolens, volens zu diplomatischer Kommunikation angehalten wird, zumindest, wenn man etwas bewegen will. [...] 2005 oder 2006, ich weiß das nicht mehr genau, habe ich übrigens beschlossen, prinzipiell das Neue-Musik-System nicht mehr zu kritisieren. Ich habe bewusst das Schweigen gewählt. Ich habe anderes zu tun.'

Since 2000 at the latest, my active criticism towards the new music system has been diminished. I am getting older, I don't like to repeat myself, and I want to focus on other things. [...] In 2005 or 2006 [...] I have decided not to criticize the new music system anymore. I deliberately chose to remain silent. I have other things to do.'³⁵

In the last chapter of his *Kritik der neuen Musik*, Mahnkopf explains how the *Paradigmenwechsel* in new music can be seen as the result of the disappearance of tonal syntax. The tonal language not only covers the ordering of pitches according to scales and keys, but also divides time into formal sections, such as movements, themes, phrases, motifs and so on. When this syntax disappeared with the emergence of atonality, time became an open space (*Freiraum*) where coherence is difficult to obtain or to perceive. In Mahnkopf's opinion, most composers (including the serialists) give no adequate answers to this problem.³⁶

The absence of a unifying syntax creates the opportunity to stack heterogeneous and independent layers (*Schichten*). In order to make sense, these combined layers should have an internal homogeneity, material identity and a coherent flow of time. In other words, each layer should be shaped by some kind of individual syntax. It is just a small step from this combination of organically organized layers to the combination of entire (and by definition organically organized) compositions, or in Mahnkopf's case, a poly-work.

In order to see why Mahnkopf made such an effort to create his *Theory of Polyphony*, we have to approach it as part of a larger critical and philosophical view of recent music history. The fundamentals of Mahnkopf's view of recent developments in music are outlined in *Kritik der neuen Musik*, but Mahnkopf more clearly formulates his desiderata for the music of the 21st century in an essay entitled *Second Modernity – An Attempted Assessment*.³⁷ In short, Mahnkopf follows a strictly Hegelian approach to dealing with modernism, post-modernism and second modernity.³⁸ Post-modernism is a reaction to a musical modernism that was characterized by an insatiable appetite for the new, and the desire to create structures from a single nucleus (for instance the series). In post-modernism, the development of new materials is impossible, and thus all material is equally valuable. A consistent style is out of reach. In Mahnkopf's line of thought, post-modernism is validated from the perspective of second modernity. He labels post-modern music as hedonistic, showing 'an enjoyment of its own combinatorial imagination with a certain frivolous air unique to music',³⁹ as narrative, as formally heteronomous (using existing forms), as using material from other music, and as ironic. Second modernity, then, is the opposite. Composers of the second modernity are critically engaged, construct autonomous material, they 'assume a critical stance towards

³⁵ Zehentreiter, p. 321.

³⁶ Mahnkopf, *Kritik Der Neuen Musik. Entwurf Einer Musik Des 21. Jahrhunderts*, p. 111.

³⁷ Mahnkopf, 'Second Modernity - An Attempted Assessment.'

³⁸ Mahnkopf borrows this terminology from art theorist Heinrich Klotz (*Kunst Im 20. Jahrhundert: Moderne - Postmoderne - Zweite Moderne* (München: Beck, 1994)).

³⁹ Mahnkopf, 'Second Modernity - An Attempted Assessment', p. 13.

contemporary culture, and are hence not motivated primarily by careerism'. Composers of the second modernity are also *'aesthetically enlightened in their thinking'*.⁴⁰

These are the words of a composer convinced that he is in the middle of the synthesis of a Hegelian construction. The second modernity – *his* second modernity – is established to solve the aporiae of both modernism and post-modernism. Mahnkopf wants to contribute to this process both as an author/philosopher and as a composer. One of the most important elements of musical composition in this respect is the musical material that is used. His main criticism of post-modernist composers is that they use a kind of material that has not been developed to the latest state of the art, and consequently is inadequate for constituting true works of art. For Mahnkopf, the use of existing material foreign to his own musical language would prevent the creation of autonomous compositions. At this point, it is very important to turn to one of Mahnkopf's more recent contributions to the literature, after the point when he somewhat softened his approach to this matter.⁴¹

From his article *The Inclusion of the Non-Own. On Five Works with Foreign Material*, we can only conclude that (according to Mahnkopf) this Hegelian process of modernity – post-modernity – second modernity must have reached its final state. Post-modernism has been overcome, and since music is no longer progressing towards the synthesis, but already has arrived at the stage of second modernity, Mahnkopf can allow himself to include musical materials that are alien to his personal style.

'I first had to wait until postmodernism itself became historical [...] I had to await the dawn of a Second Modernity.'⁴²

This act of waiting seems rather strange if we recall that Mahnkopf himself is the architect of the whole concept of *Second Modernity*. Nevertheless, we can see an important shift in Mahnkopf's aesthetic attitude towards musical material. While he initially kept harping on the importance of creating a personal musical language (not per se implying a coherent style, but rather a kind of material coherence), he now leaves a window of opportunity open for the inclusion of musical material from other/earlier composers. Mahnkopf himself indicates very clearly the point at which this change in his aesthetic conviction took place. Around 2002 he created a sound installation (*Void-mal d'archive*) with recordings from the Jewish Museum in Berlin (using non-musical foreign material) and in 2003 he composed the string quartet *Hommage à Theodor W. Adorno* in which he draws on the *Piano Sonata* by Alban Berg.⁴³

In Mahnkopf's oeuvre, these compositions come shortly after the *Kurtág-Zyklus*, in which we have already shown a fair number of references to musical material from other compositions. In this sense, the *Kurtág-Zyklus* already prefigures Mahnkopf's turn to the 'post-postmodern' inclusion of the 'Non-Own'. In fact, there is no conceptual difference between the transformation of material from Berg's *Sonata* into Mahnkopf-like motives/pitch collections in his string quartet and the

⁴⁰ Mahnkopf, 'Second Modernity - An Attempted Assessment', p. 10.

⁴¹ Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, 'The Inclusion of the Non-Own. On Five Works with Foreign Material', in *Musical Material Today*, ed. by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Frank Cox, and Wolfram Schurig (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2012), pp. 117–37.

⁴² Mahnkopf, 'The Inclusion of the Non-Own. On Five Works with Foreign Material', p. 117.

⁴³ Mahnkopf, 'The Inclusion of the Non-Own. On Five Works with Foreign Material', p. 117.

derivation of material from Kurtág's *Grabstein für Stephan*. In the former case, Mahnkopf takes the opening motif of the *Piano Sonata* (G – C – F#) and multiplies it into polyphonic textures. In the latter, he also takes the opening motif (the open guitar strings E – A – D – G – B – E) and turns it into arpeggiations of his own *Angelus Novus*-chords.

By creating a referential (and self-referential) intertextual web around the *Kurtág-Zyklus*, Mahnkopf not only introduced a strong sense of coherence in his oeuvre, but at the same time connected his composition with concrete historical and contextual elements. He refers to György Kurtág, Mark Andre, Luigi Nono, Brian Ferneyhough, Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Nietzsche and Jorge Luis Borges, all of whom fit very well in his aesthetic ideology. Brian Ferneyhough for instance, is described by Mahnkopf as both the 'first musical deconstructivist' of new music and 'father of the Second Modernity' while Nono is an important representative of the First Modernity.⁴⁴ Mark Andre, on the other hand, is a fellow composer who shares the ideas of the Second Modernity. By clearly referring to these specific composers and authors, Mahnkopf justifies his music and aesthetic choices. But why does he not take his *Kurtág-Zyklus* as the first example of music which includes foreign material?

Perhaps he thought that the year 2002 would be a more appropriate marker to begin a new phase in his work; we know that he self-consciously interpreted the year 1992 as a turning point, because he felt that a composer should have shown what he stands for before reaching the age of 30. Mahnkopf even designates the period before 1992 as '*die erste Phase, die der Selbstkonstitution*'.⁴⁵ Pursuing this (admittedly perhaps rather speculative) line of thought, we can see important demarcations in his work every ten years. In 2002, he started with the book series *New Music and Aesthetics in the 21st Century*, which – despite its wide range of very interesting contributions – is still very much centred around the spectrum of contemporary music closest to *Second Modernity*. In 2012, the first book exclusively devoted to his music, *Die Musik von Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf*, was published. The 28 original essays in this book are framed by two interviews with Mahnkopf. In the second, he hints at how consciously he builds his oeuvre. Mahnkopf studied Schoenberg's first *Kammersymphonie* closely in the context of his dissertation *Gestalt und Stil: Schönbergs Erste Kammersymphonie und ihr Umfeld* (completed in 1992!).⁴⁶ In 1993, he then decided to compose his first *Kammersymphonie* as a response to Schoenberg's, and to add new works in the same genre every seven years. Hence the second *Kammersymphonie*, which was a part of the 2000 music theatre *Angelus Novus* and the *Dritte Kammersymphonie*, composed in 2007. The Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation commissioned his Fourth Chamber Symphony in 2014 (the first performance was scheduled for March-April 2015 by *Sinfonietta Leipzig*, but has been postponed).⁴⁷ Perhaps, for a composer building his oeuvre in this way, it is not that far-fetched to consider demarcations in his creative output every ten years as well.

If we abandon this hypothetical notion of parallel periodizations, it is also possible that in Mahnkopf's view, the *Kurtág-Zyklus* could not act as the first composition of a new era, because it already had an important function as a pivot point in another development. After completing his music theatre composition *Angelus Novus*, he decided to take his music in two opposite directions,

⁴⁴ Mahnkopf, *Kritische Theorie Der Musik*, p. 141.

⁴⁵ Zehentreiter, p. 329.

⁴⁶ Published as Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, *Gestalt Und Stil: Schönbergs Erste Kammersymphonie Und Ihr Umfeld* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1994).

⁴⁷ Zehentreiter, p. 333. In the same interview, Mahnkopf theoretically plans to write his next *Kammersymphonie* in 2021.

one extremely complex and full of activity, the other much more essentialist and tranquil. The former direction would result in his – to use a Nietzschean term – ‘Dionysian’ *Pynchon-Zyklus*, while the latter led to the composition of the more ‘Apollonian’ *Kurtág-Zyklus*.⁴⁸ Taking the *Kurtág-Zyklus* as the beginning of the part of his oeuvre in which he includes the Non-Own might then make this direction more important than the direction of the *Pynchon-Zyklus*.

These hypotheses are perhaps not that important as such, and Mahnkopf would probably have additional arguments in attributing meanings and functions to his compositions. What matters in this context is the fact that Mahnkopf’s choices as a composer are based on many more contextual elements than one would assume at first sight. In addition to the internal coherence of his poly-works (which is astounding given the scope of the works and the intricacies of his language and material) we can see a deliberate positioning of one composition in a larger oeuvre and even in a music-history perspective.

This resonates with Bloom’s theory of influence. The compositional and aesthetic choices Mahnkopf makes are firmly rooted in the music he considers to be historically relevant. This music is a determining factor for the music Mahnkopf can (and has to) create.⁴⁹

At this point, we can see how Mahnkopf the music theorist and Mahnkopf the composer align as one person with strong convictions. The music he writes serves to exemplify his reading of the history of music. At the same time, it is Mahnkopf’s analysis of music history which directs him towards the choices he makes. As with Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, we meet a composer who puts everything in a historical perspective, even the music he will write next year.

⁴⁸ Zehentreiter, p. 331.

⁴⁹ Mahnkopf seconds Schoenberg’s famous conviction as expressed in the famous quote: ‘*Kunst kommt nicht vom Können, sondern vom Müssen.*’ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie Der Neuen Musik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), p. 46.

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